

New York Saturday Evening Post A HOME WEEKLY FOR WINTER NIGHTS AND SUMMER DAYS.

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No. 305.

DEATH'S MISSION.

BY HARVEY HOWARD.

Oh, why should sunsets roses fade so early?
Before the winter's breath?
Why should the lilles love be laid
By nature's law of death?
Why does the cypress delicate
Lose all its grace and die?
The gladiolus so late
With moldered splendor lie?
The modest primrose, and the fern
So cool and fresh and fair,
The warm geranium of the urn—
Why are they rotting there?
Ah! wise the hand that slays the flower
Which we have learned to slight,
That flings the pall of winter o'er
The summer creatures bright;
Only, when once again we long
The blossoms sweet to know,
Or hear the vanished robin's song,
The streamlet's laughing flow,
To give new life unto the dead,
Awake the winter-slain,
Bring back the blessings that are fled,
And give us joy again.

Happy Harry,

THE WILD BOY OF THE WOODS;

The Pirates of the Northern Lakes.

BY OLL COOMES,
AUTHOR OF "IDAHO TOM," "DAKOTA DAN,"
"BOWIE-KNIFE BEN," "OLD HURRICANE,"
"HAWKEYE HARRY," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WATER SPRITE'S RETURN.

We will not attempt to describe what followed the capture of Long Beard, Margery and Captain Rankin. They were all bound and carried away to the boats, the woman in a state of total unconsciousness.

Kirby Kale searched the cabin through and through as if for something which he particularly wanted. He ransacked every box, nook and corner in the house. In a small chest in a bedroom he found an infant's clothes and some playthings all carefully folded and laid away. A sigh, then an oath escaped the lips of the ruthless plunderer when his eyes fell upon the infantile garments and trinkets. With set teeth and clenched fists he sat and gazed upon them, his thoughts reverting to the dim past. Then, as a mist gathered in the sinful man's eyes, that hard, wicked look on his face softened; his soul seemed smarting under the remorseless reproaches of a guilty conscience.

Finally he dashed everything aside and with a violent oath strode out of the building. Just across the threshold he stopped, when he saw that his men had all gone to the boats with the dead, wounded and prisoners. Terror seized upon him when he found that he was alone in the gloomy night. He trembled—his teeth chattered and his soul cowered. Then that terrible death-warning, that strange "chirp" rung startling upon the air. With a bound the English officer reached the darkness, as a bullet cut through the space where he had stood a moment before.

He ran with all speed, urged on by the phantom of vengeance, down to the boats, where he found the men in a passion of fury over the loss of every ear left on the boats. This loss delayed their retreat all of an hour—until cars could be extemporized from boards torn from the out-buildings.

In the mean time Happy Harry was busy. Having stoled about, putting in a deadly shot now and then, until he saw that his aid was of no further avail to his friends, he turned, and hurrying down to the boats, removed and concealed every ear.

Then he crept back into the bushes and waited until the soldiers had emerged from the cabin with their captives. Fearing, however, that there might be others in the cabin, he waited several minutes, when, true enough, a man appeared in the doorway. He recognized the form by its outlines as that of Kirby Kale. Raising his rifle, and giving utterance to his warning cry, he fired, with the result already seen.

Satisfied that the house was deserted, he crept up to the door and entered. All around gave evidence of the dreadful struggle. The ruin was complete—that house was indeed desolate. With a heavy heart he turned to go out, when Belshazzar uttered a low growl and crouched in the doorway as if about to spring upon something in the darkness without.

Harry's first thought was that one of the soldiers had returned to the cabin. He glanced out into the night; all was gloom; but a voice from out the darkness came:

"Doggy, will you bite—here, fellow?" it said, in a low, musical tone, tremulous with fear.

"Be still, Belshazzar!" commanded the youth, and his dog rose from his couchant position and turned aside.

Then the darkness seemed to part, and from between the walls of gloom a light appeared—the light of a sweet, angelic face. A young girl of sixteen crossed the threshold and confronted the boy.

In speechless wonder he stood and regarded the maiden, who, running her eyes about the room and seeing its disorder, cried out:

"Oh, where are my friends?"

Harry knew her now; the maiden called Tempy, who had gone to Colonel Miller with Captain Rankin's dispatches.



A young girl of sixteen crossed the threshold and confronted the boy.

"I'm sorry—very sorry to say," the lad replied, recovering from his momentary embarrassment, "that the English soldiers took your friends away to their brig."

"Oh, my poor pap!" my poor sister!"—it will kill them, kill them!" she cried, wringing her little hands in a paroxysm of grief.

"Little woman," said the youth, with rude, harsh words, "I believe I know who you are. I heard your sister Margery tell Long Beard that Tempy had gone off with some dispatches to the headquarters of some colonel, and I guess you're the girl, are you not?"

"Yes, sir, I am."

"Well, you see I'm Happy Harry, and am down here with the govenor—that's Long Beard. I'm a friend of his'n and done all I could to keep the pisen English from capturin' them. But it wasn't no use. They come too many, and bustin' the door down, bolted in. But I tell you, Miss, a hornet stung a few of them red-coats as they won't hear another buzz this side of the judgment day. I've been the very edge of despair—a brink of eternity to several of 'em, and I can just fight for you like a nest of hornits."

"And that ole dog, Belshazzar, 'll fight for an angel any time; but, as we're only a few, we'd better do the best we can."

"Well, what can we do? that's the question."

"Let me see," said the boy, scratching his head, reflectively. "I guess we'd better hide this little angel hers on the island, then we'll take to the lake, row down towards the brig, and see what we can do about takin' possession of the institution."

"Preposterous!" exclaimed Lieutenant Reeder.

"There's nothin' impossible," Lieutenant Reeder. "I once heard of a man that surrounded a hull squad of men and captured 'em. Why, it's nothin' after you git used to it once. When you git to be an ole veteran like me, you'll buckle right up and attack a' canon, and if it ain't loaded you may carry the works. And so it is with the brig; if we'll spruce right up to her, we may capture her, provided her crew is not aboard."

"Yes, sir, I am."

"Then we'll take the others."

"Taken!—where to?"

"Them English are soldiers, and jist off the Pieleads to the north, they've got a small brig-of-war, and it's to that vessel they'll take your friends."

"Oh, certainly; but that is not likely to be."

"It is, lieutenant, likely to be," returned Harry; "you see, the dogged thing war afraid to run down here among the islands and bars without takin' soundin's, and so they anchored up there and sent a boat down here to reconnoiter; but, 'twixt me and Belshazzar, we managed to extract their boat out from under 'em, and then I talked out of my long-ranged mouth to 'em, when click, click, whang-che-bang went their old muskets into the gloomy night. These sounds made them up at the brig think a battle was goin' on, so down to the islands come another boat-load of English buzzards, and after a while here come another, and so I don't think there were many left at the big boat. All of a score of men came down, and I can't see what more'n that's a-doin' aboard a little affair like that brig. But, say there are five left: I believe we can git ahead of 'em as have been here, and salt the brig and her crew. I do for a monstrosus fact."

"An escort of soldiers under Lieutenant Reeder of Colonel Miller's command."

"The great, hoppin' hornits! you don't say?"

Why, I'm jist at home with them fellers, Tempy, I am, for a munificent fact. I know every mother's boy of 'em better'n a book. Just lead the way to whar they be; I want to grapple with 'em."

Tempy led the way from the cabin, along a dim path through the undergrowth—down to the beach where seven men, in the uniform of United States soldiers, were waiting.

"My friends are all taken captives," sobbed Tempy, as they approached the men.

"Indeed! It is too bad, but I see you are not alone," said one of the men, whose voice Harry recognized as that of Lieutenant Philip Reeder.

"No sir; she's not alone, Lieutenant Reeder," the youth answered, stepping forward.

"Happy Harry, the Wild Boy!" exclaimed the soldiers.

Lieutenant Reeder grasped the youth's hand, and shaking it warmly, asked:

"What's the trouble here, Harry? Have the English got this far down?"

"You mean this fur up, don't you—up from Satan's dominions?"

"Well, have it as you please, but what's the trouble?"

Harry narrated all that had transpired on the island during the night. The soldiers, completely astonished by his story, knew not what course to pursue, so turned to Harry for suggestion.

"Horats!" exclaimed the youth, "if my say'd do the work, I'd say exterminate the English and Indians, overrun Canada, and take possession of the province and run it in our own private interests. But, as we're only a few, we'd better do the best we can."

"Well, what can we do? that's the question."

"Let me see," said the boy, scratching his head, reflectively. "I guess we'd better hide this little angel hers on the island, then we'll take to the lake, row down towards the brig, and see what we can do about takin' possession of the institution."

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"What's the trouble here, Harry? Have the English got this far down?"

"That is easier proposed than executed, Harry," said Lieutenant Reeder.

"Great, hoppin' hornits, yes! in course it is easier to do the talk than the work, lieutenant. But then, we must always lay our plans and work up to 'em. Now, that brig, lieutenant, is not goin' to be fool enough to pull up and run down here and surrender herself to us. No sir: we've got to go up there and land thunder outen her crew of red-coats, and in course we've got to get up and buzz. Here's seven of you and one of me, that's eight Belshazzar I'll leave with Miss Temple. Well, eight is a good force. Every Yankee is skel to three Britishers; that makes eight times three, which is forty-four—forty-four red-coats that we can whip. Just think of it, Lieutenant Reeder!"

"Well, what can we do? that's the question."

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"That is easier proposed than executed, Harry," said Lieutenant Reeder.

"Boys, do you see that light off here-aways?"

"It means that I'm Captain Kidd, the pirate, and that I'm master of this brig."

The mate drew his short sword, but, before he could use it, Harry dealt him a blow that laid him prostrate upon the deck.

Five minutes later Lieutenant Reeder and his men were aboard the brig. Before the mate had fully recovered, he was bound and gagged. Then they descended to the captain's quarters, unlocked the door and pushed it open. Like a hurricane the enraged skipper started toward the door in blind fury, but the muzzles of seven American rifles caused him to recoil with surprise and horror. It required but a moment to convince him of the situation, and he sheathed his sword in token of submission. He was at once bound and gagged, and locked in the room.

This success suggested a second stroke, and arrangements were made for the reception of Long Beard's captors. Each man took his position to await their arrival. A deathlike stillness settled over the brig. That dim light still hung in the rigging, a guide to those on the dark waters.

Half an hour went by.

Still those eight shadowy forms on deck wait and watch with bated breath. Suddenly the dip of oars breaks upon their ears—the boats are coming!

The Americans nerve themselves for the ordeal. A severe struggle is imminent. Hither and thither, like a dusky shadow, flies Harry, trying to catch a glimpse of the boats.

One of them soon came alongside the brig. The murmur of voices could be distinctly heard below. In a few moments five soldiers ascended from their barge to the brig's deck, with three captives in custody. The guard was conducting his prisoners across deck, when eight forms rose up before and around the English with leveled rifles, and a voice cried out:

"Scrender, every mother's brat of you!"

It was the voice of the Wild Boy of the Woods.

The English, so lately flushed with victory, were stricken almost speechless. They saw at a glance that the brig had been captured, and not knowing how many of the enemy were aboard, surrendered without a word.

And Long Beard, Margery and Captain Rankin were free again!

"Harry, Harry, my boy, is this your work?" asked the giant, advancing to his side and laying his hand upon the lad's head.

"Well, not all of it, general. I done some figurin', a bit of fightin', more runnin' and skulkin', and finally came to with my head in the grub basket of this brig's pussy old captain—I—"

"Sh! hark!" cautioned Reeder, "the other boat is coming."

True enough, the other boat could be heard approaching, and it is quite probable that its crew would have met the fate of the first boat, had it not been for one thing—the first mate succeeded in getting his mouth free, when at the top of his lungs he shouted forth a thunderous warning to his friends.

Lieutenant Reeder sprang forward and demanded the surrender of the party, which was already within hailing distance; but the crew, seeing the trap into which their friends had fallen, resolved to avert a similar fate, and turning their boat, fled away over the water.

This left the brig in the undisputed possession of the Americans, and without a dissenting voice it was declared the prize of Happy Harry.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHERE WAS SHE?

THE captive crew of the "Scout," this being the name of the little brig, was at once securely bound and lodged below deck. Their attention was given to Captain Rankin, who was still suffering severely from his wounds and late captivity. He was placed in comfortable quarters and his wounds attended to with all the surgical skill and tenderness that those around him possessed. The faithful Margery, although a sufferer herself from the mental tortures and horrors of her late captivity, rendered every kindness in her power to those around her comfortable.

Long Beard, fortunately, was an old sailor, and made himself at home aboard the brig. To him all now turned for further directions, and he suggested that, as the wind was favorable, they weigh anchor and make for a southward port.

"But, look a-here, general," said Harry, "couldn't you be induced to drop down to your island and see if all's right there?"

"I care nothing about the island, Harry. When my children are safe, then I may look after our home."

"But, see here, Big Beard, I've news for you," replied the youth; "an angel fluttered down onto that island after you were captured, and she said her name was Temple, and that she was your gal."

"Harry, you're jesting now."

"I can prove it; these soldiers came with her."

"It is so, stranger," affirmed Lieutenant Reeder.

"Then, of course, I will stop at the island for her; but how does it come that she is back so soon?"

"I will tell you," answered Reeder. "Colonel Miller sent me out with eight men to reconnoiter the coast, some fifty miles north of the fort, and fortunately met your daughter. When we made ourselves known, she told us where she was going and for what purpose. I offered to relieve her of the dangerous journey, when she gave up the dispatches and I sent two men in her boat back to the post with them, while I took her into my boat and brought her back to the island. We landed a few minutes after your capture."

"Thank Heaven! thank Heaven! Then Tempy is safe, too," said the old father, joyfully. "Yes, of course we'll touch the island and take her aboard. Did you leave Tempy alone?"

"Yes," replied Reeder; "we dare not weaken our little force a single man. We thought if we made sure of the brig, all would be well otherwise, and if we failed and were ourselves captured, she would be safe. That's why we left her alone on the island."

"Allow me, Lieutenant," said Harry, politely, "to say that Miss Temple are not alone. My dog, Belsazar, are with her, and you know, general, that that's as much as to say that half a dozen mighty good men guarded her. Bell will fight as long as he's able to wag his tail, and so I think we'll find the young angel all right."

"Then we will move at once."

It required but a few minutes to weigh anchor, hoist sail and put the brig in motion. The giant, assisted by the soldiers, manned the little craft with remarkable skill, and in an hour's time they stood off the island—the home of Long Beard.

A boat was lowered, and Harry and a cou-

ple of soldiers were sent ashore for Tempy. They were gone nearly two hours, and when they returned they were accompanied only by the youth's dog, which bore many bloody marks—evidence of a terrible encounter with a terrible foe.

But Tempy—she was not to be found—she was gone from the island!

(To be continued—commenced in No. 301.)

LET IT PASS.

Be not swift to take offence;
Let it pass!
Anger is a fo to sense;
Let it pass!
Brood not over wrong,
Which will disappear ere long;
Rather sing this cheery song—
Let it pass!

If for good you've taken ill;
Let it pass!
Oh! be kind and gentle still;
Let it pass!
Time at last makes things straight;
Let us not regret but wait;
And our triumph will be great;
Let it pass!

Erminie:

THE GIPSY QUEEN'S VOW.

BY MRS. MAY AGNES FLEMING,
AUTHOR OF "THE DARK SECRET," "AN AWFUL MYSTERY," "VICTORIA," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXX.

MISS LAWLESS IN DIFFICULTIES.

"The hypocrite had left his mask, and stood in naked ugliness. He was a man Who stole the livery of the court of Heaven To serve the devil in." —POLLOCK.

THREE hours after his interview and rejection by Erminie, Judge Lawless alighted at the inn-door in Judestown. The obsequious landlord came out all bows and smiles to greet the grand seignior of this rustic town, and ushered him into the parlor with as much, and considerably more, respect than he would have shown to the king of England, had that gentleman condescended to visit the "Judestown House," as the flaming gilt sign-board announced it to be.

"Glass wine, sir! brandy water, sir! s'gur, sir! anything you want, sir!" insinuated mine host, all in a breath.

"No, my good man, I want nothing," said the judge, with a pompous wave of his jeweled hand; "I have come on important business this afternoon. Is there a somewhat dissipated character, a sailor, called Black—Black—really I—"

"Bart, sir? Yes, sir. Here five minutes ago, sir," breathlessly cut in the landlord.

"Ah!" said the judge, slowly, passing his hand over his mustache; "can you find him for me? I wish to see him. I have reason to believe he can give me some information concerning those smugglers who of late have alarmed the good people around here so much."

"Yes, sir; hunt him up five minutes, sir," And off hustled the host of the Judestown House in search of Black Bart.

Judge Lawless arose with kuit bows and began pacing excitedly up and down the room, when alone. He knew this Black Bart well, knew all about the smugglers, too, as his well-stocked cellar could testify. Judge Lawless found them very useful in various ways, and having a remarkably elastic conscience of his own, was troubled with no scruples about cheating the revenue, so long as his wine-bin was well supplied. But this was abduction—something more dangerous, something that required all his wounded self-love, and disappointed passion, and intense mortification to give him courage for. But his plans were formed. For money he knew Black Bart and his comrades would do anything, and money Judge Lawless had in plenty.

Half an hour passed. The judge began to cast many an impatient glance toward the door, when a bold, vigorous knock was heard.

Knocks are very expressive to those who understand them; they speak as plainly as words; and this one was given with a loud, surly indecision, that said, just as plainly as lips could speak: "I am as good a man as you are, Judge Lawless, and I don't care a curse for you or all the revenue officers from here to Land's End."

Judge Lawless understood it, and throwing himself into a chair, he called out, blandly:

"Come in."

The door opened, and a short, thick-set, weather-beaten, grim-looking old sea-dog made his appearance, and giving his head a slight jerk to one side, by way of acknowledging the judge's presence, walked straight up to the fire-place, and deliberately spit a discharge of tobacco-juice right into the eyes of an unoffending cat, by way of commencing business.

Then turning his back to the mantel, he put his hands behind him, crossed his feet, and stood ready to commence operations.

"Well, square, what's in the wind now?" demanded the new-comer, at length, seeing the judge did not seem inclined to speak.

"Bart," said the judge, in a low, cautious tone, "I have a job for you."

"All right—I'm there! what's it, square? Anythink in the old line?"

"No; this is something quite different. How long do you remain here this time?"

"Can't say for certain, boss. The schooner's off a-repairin' and we're tryin' the land dodge till she's ready again! no tellin' though, yet, when that may be."

"Is that woman who accompanies you here likewise?"

"Cap'n's wife? Well, yes, square, I reckon she is. What do you want of her?"

"I want her to take charge of a young girl that you must carry off. Do you understand?"

"Forcible 'diction, 'saultin' and battenin'. Come, square, you're goin' it strong."

"Speak lower, for heaven's sake! Will you undertake to do this for me?"

"If you make it worth while! Fork over the needful, and I'm there!"

"Money you shall have; but do you think this woman will undertake to look after the girl?"

"See here, square; don't say 'this woman.' Call her the cap'n's lady—sounds better. Oh, she's got nothing to do with it; she's got to mind the cap'n. Who's the gal?"

"Sh-sh! not so loud, man! Do you know the cottage on the Barrens, between Dismal Hollow and Heath Hill?"

"Like a book. Why, square, it's not that beauty they talk about here: Miss—Miss—danged if I don't forget the name!"

"Never mind the name—it's of no consequence. She's the girl. Do you know her?"

"Hain't the honor; but one of our crew, a sort of dry-water sailor, knows her; I'll bring him along, and everything will go off like a new broom."

"You must be careful to not mention my

name—not even to her; because it would be a dreadful thing for me if this were found out."

"Don't be scary, square, I'll be as close as a clam at high water. When do you want us to captivate the little dear?"

"To-night—any time—the sooner the better!"

"Will you be on hand yourself, square?"

"No! To avoid the faintest shadow of suspicion—though such is not likely to rest on me in any case—I will start for Baltimore immediately, within the very hour, and there remain till all the hubbub her disappearance causes has passed away. You will keep her securely in your hidden cave all the time; and when the excitement has died out I will come and relieve you of your charge."

"You're a brick, square—you are, by Lord Harry! What will be your next dodge, then?"

"That's as may be; most probably I shall take her with me to England. That's to be thought of yet, however; but I'll find a way, never fear."

"Square, they ought to 'lect you to the Senate—dang my buttons if they oughtn't! When I get unseaworthy I'm going to set up for myself, can lie and fight, and roar at 'agonists like a brick; and got all the other qualifications, too numerous to mention."

And with this slander on senators in general, Black Bart clapped half a plug of tobacco in the other cheek, and indulged in a quiet chuckle.

"Well, that's all, I believe," said the judge, rising.

"You think you will know this girl when you see her?"

"I won't—'tother one will—trust me, square; I'll go off and see him now, and him and me will take a stroll round that way."

"If she could be inveigled from the house after night it would be the best time and way," said the judge, musingly.

"Leave all these particulars to me, square; I'll fix things up about the tallest. When's the needful to come?"

"When I return. You know me. Now, Bart, remember, to-night if you can; in three or four weeks at the furthest, I will return."

The judge turned and left the room, mounted his horse and rode off. Black Bart hitched up his pantaloons, and then fell back in a chair, snapping his fingers, flourishing his heels, and indulging in such tremendous roars of laughter that the landlord rushed in, in deadly alarm, to see what awful calamity had happened.

But still Black Bart gave vent to such appalling laughter-claps, without speaking, throwing himself back as if his spine was made of steel springs, and then jerking him straight again, kicking his heels, snapping his finger and thumb, and indulging in such extraordinary antics of delight, that Boniface, completely at a loss, stood staring at him in silent wonder, thinking the judge's communication, whatever it might have been, had completely turned his brain.

"There, Bart, be quiet now," said the host, soothingly.

"You're soaring the people in the shop out of their wits. What's the matter with you, any way?"

"Nothing," replied Black Bart, going off into another roar, more deafening, if possible, than the first.

"Well, I must say 'nothing' seems to be rather funny," said the pugnacious landlord.

"Was the judge pumping you about the smugglers?"

"Oh, Lord, don't!" shouted the sailor, with such a perfect yell of laughter and twisting himself into such frightful contortions of inward delight, that the startled host sprung back and grasped the handle of the door, with a terrified glance toward his strange guest.

"I'm off now," said Bart, at length, as soon as he had recovered from this last paroxysm; and wiping the tears from his eyes, he started at a Flora Temple pace down the street, passing, however, now and then, as his lively sense of the ridiculous overcame him, to indulge in another terrifying peal of laughter, till at length he should disclose to her the secret of his fierce and daily increasing love.

And in this unpleasant way matters stood on the day when Pet set out from Heath Hill to Old Barrens Cottage. Pet was a good walker; but, owing to the intense heat, she was completely tired out by the time she reached the cottage. Erminie alone was there, ready to welcome her friend with her own peculiar, sunshiny smile.

It was very pleasant, that cool, breezy sitting-room, that scorchingly hot day, with its plain straw matting, its cool, green, Venetian blinds, its plump, tempting, cushioned rocking-chairs, and fragrant bouquets of flowers in glasses of pure, sparkling water. But the prettiest, pleasantest sight of all was its lovely young mistress in her simple, beautifully-fitting dress of blue gingham, with its snowy collar and little black silk apron boasting the cunningest pockets in the world; her shiny hair floating twined in broad damp braids round her superb little head; and where the sunshine lingered lovingly upon it, seeming like a shining glory over her smooth white brow. Yes, it was very pleasant—the pretty cottage-room; the lovely cottage-maiden; and yet the dark, bright, dazzling brunette in her glistening shot silk, with her flashing jettycurls, her lustrous, splendid Syrian eyes, of midnight blackness; her whole vivacious, restless, glittering, entrancing face and form lost nothing by contrast with any one in the world.

"Who's the girl?" he asked, at length.

"That wonderful beauty at Old Barrens Cottage—nothing shorter. Everything arranged, and the square will come down like a prince—or if he doesn't, we'll make him. I don't know her; so you're to come with me, and together we'll carry off the girl the first chance. The judge has gone to Baltimore to keep out of harm's way, and won't be back for three or four weeks. Ain't it beautiful? The old judge in love! Ha! ha! ha!"

Like lightning there flashed a project of revenge across the mind of the now notorious Rözzel Garnet. None of the smugglers knew

"I'm not saying it wasn't Mickee, looking at the matter from your standpoint. No, your suspicions were natural enough, only you might have known that I wouldn't have cheated a friend; but let that pass. This gold belongs to me, alone. I hid it here nearly three years ago, as you can see by the date of this paper. Ah, I forgot that you can't read. Never mind. You can't well doubt me, after I tell you that I am willing to divide with you—to give you one-half of this gold."

"You ain't lyin'—" muttered Lynch, brushing the moisture from his brow, an eager light in his eyes.

"No, I'm in earnest. Only—you can keep a secret?"

"Try me," was the prompt reply. "For a friend, I kin."

"Good enough! Well, then, half of this gold is yours; your share will pan out about twenty-five thousand dollars, Mickee. Hush—wait until I am through. Not only is one half of this yours, but I know where we can lay hands on ten times as much. Yes, I have found out that old rascal's secret, and we will empty his precious pocket, you and I, Mickee, my man!"

"I'd go to the divile fer ye, twice over, fer half the money, an' say thank ye to the bar—gain—I would so! But ye mane it! Ye ain't comin' the blarney over me!"

"No; honor bright, Mickee; surely you can trust me, after what I have told you. But listen. I'll give you another proof; I'll put my very life in your hands. Then you'll believe I'm in sober earnest."

"The fact is," continued Brand, speaking in a low, confidential tone, as he squatted over the pile of gold and deliberately filled his pipe, "the fact is, Mickee, I'm tired of the kind of life we're leading. It's all very well for a change, but it's too slow to suit me. Now, I've made up my mind to cut loose from the band, and strike out for myself. With this gold, together with what we can make out of this pocket of old fool, we can afford to put on style and cut a splurge, if we wish. We—for, of course, you mean to stick by me—will make our way to 'Frisco, take passage on the first steamer for, say England or Ireland. 'Twouldn't be safe to stop in the States, for some years, at least, for you know how strict the oath of the band is. We'd be hunted out and killed, sure."

"There—I think I have proved my faith in you, for were you to even hint at what I have just said, where Barada could get hold of it, my head wouldn't be worth a single smill of whisky."

"Divile a Lynch in the wurruld was iver a turstior, nor will Mickee be the first to play the dirty informer," earnestly replied the Irishman.

"Good enough! I knew I could trust you, old man," said Brand, frankly enough; yet there was a devilish glitter in his eye that boded no good for his trusting comrade. "First, we will take and put this stuff in a better place; some of the boys might chance by and take a notion to see who had disturbed the ground here, and what for. Come, off with your breeches; they're stouter than mine, and these precious nuggets are too heavy for anything else to stand the pressure."

Nothing loth, Lynch took off his trowsers, and first tying the bottoms of the legs firmly, tenderly dropped the rough, irregular nuggets of gold into the novel receptacle, while Eli Brand secured the skin-bags containing the dust and pebbles.

An eavesdropper would have declared that the two men were upon the best of terms, that they trusted each other without a single doubt or scruple to mar the harmony that should always exist betwixt uson friends."

And yet, while his tongue was uttering seemingly sincere expressions of friendship, while he was brothers in everything, Eli Brand was carefully maturing a foul act of treachery—was studying how he could best murder his comrade.

Together the two men trudged away from the rifled cache, weighted down by the burden of gold—already blood-stained, yet fated to receive another horrible baptism—Eli Brand beguiling the way with his smooth, plausible tongue.

He selected a spot where, as he said, the gold could rest without fear of discovery, until they could secure that other treasure and complete their arrangements for abandoning the band. Then, carefully obliterating all traces of their work, even breaking their trail for some yards around the cache, Brand led the way toward the cave.

"We must act like foxes, Mickee," he said, chuckling grimly. "Barada is no fool, and let him once get wind of what we are thinking of, and—good-by, John!"

The unsuspecting Irishman cheerfully assented to everything, and trudged on, little dreaming of what was in store.

Brand did not hesitate. He had decided that Lynch must die, and when about half a mile from the new cache, he allowed the Irishman to pass him. Silently drawing a revolver, he cocked and discharged it with almost the same motion, its muzzle so close to his victim's head that the hair was scorched and the skin blackened by the discharge.

One wild, horrible yell burst from the poor devil's lips, as he staggered blindly forward, then fell, the mingled blood and brains oozing from his shattered skull. With an angry, exultant snarl, not unlike that of a maddened panther, Eli Brand sprang upon his victim, burying the long blade of his knife once, twice to the very half beneath his shoulders. Then, assured that his foul work was well done, he sprung to his feet and darted away from the spot with all the speed at his command, never once glancing behind him.

Better for him, perhaps, if he had glanced back; at least his end might have been different. He would have seen three men gliding through the bushes, gradually approaching the murdered man. Might have seen them pause beside the body; one stooped and turned him over.

"He's did fer," muttered Old Business, glancing at his companions. "He's got enough to kill a mule!"

Lynch opened his eyes. Though fast filming over with death, they possessed the light of reason.

"He killed me—Eli Brand," fell from his lips in slow, painful speech. "I didn't think it o' him, the snake in the grass! But I'll be revenged—I'll be revenged!"

Then, incoherently, scarcely to be understood, he confessed the whole truth. How they had unearthed the gold, and placed it in a new cache; even gave them directions for finding it, adding with his fast-fleeting breath:

"Take it—take it all! Don't let that curs ed rapparee iver set his dirty eyes on so much as a smill iv it. Don't—or my curse—the curse iv a dyin', murdered man lie upon ye forver an' iv'er!"

He was sinking fast, yet he smiled faintly when assured that Brand should never again

touch the blood-stained gold. He raved feebly of the old country, of his mother, of a little colleen whose eyes had been dimmed with tears as she bade him farewell and God-speed his quick return with a fortune from the wonderful land toward the setting sun; and then, with her name upon his lips, together with a broken prayer to Holy Mary, he died.

Silently Old Business placed the lifeless clay in a little hollow, cast a handful of leaves over the bloody form, then piled heavy rocks over all. 'Twas a rude burial; a fitting end for a wild, reckless life like his.

"Now for the gold," said Old Business, in his old tone. "That pizes cuss shain't hev none of it, even if I hev to swaller the hull lot—so thar!"

The spot was found, the treasure collected, and Old Business led the way down to the creek. After wading down its bed for some little distance, he selected a deep, dark pool, and cast his treasure into the water.

"It'll lay that ontel the crack o' doom, unless we fish fer it first. An' now, while we're in the humor, reckon we'd better look afer our o'ther bit o' wealth. Lucky taint fur from this place. Come?"

He led the way up the valley, his keen eyes roving around as though in quest of some landmark.

"Yender 'tis—at the foot o' that rock, yender, you'll find my pocket. I didn't look into it very deep, but if what I seed is a fair sample of the rest, I reckon we'll pan out 'bout seventy million! Fact, by thunder!"

Eagerly the three men ran toward the indicated rock, nor was Old Business the least astounded of the three.

CHAPTER XXX.

A LEAF FROM THE PAST.

A SHARP cry of anger broke from the lips of the trailer, echoed back by exclamations of surprise from his comrades. The soil at the base of the huge boulder was torn and trampled.

"Robbed! some one has been before us!" snarled Old Business, his eyes glittering venomously.

"Are you sure—is there no mistake?" ventured Mark.

"This is the spot; you can see for yourself," shortly replied the trailer, as he bent low, his eye closely scrutinizing the ground. "Two men have been here—ha!"

He produced the little package of strings before alluded to, and selecting one of the thongs, carefully compared it with one of the footprints. Then he raised his head with a quizzical glance and half-smile.

"It's my treat, boys—sech a double an' twisted fool as I've bin! Jest think o' me—Old Business in a minnit—think o' my bein' sucked in like that! What I tuck fer a 'pocket' was somebody's cache; an' all 'cause I was in too big a hurry to 'xamine the thing close," said the trailer, in a tone of utter disgust.

Then seeing that his meaning was still obscure, he added:

"This is the how. I stopped by this rock, tother day, to grub. I was as busy thinkin' as eatin', an' as a critter will do sometimes when he don't know it, I was foolin' known, I flopped up a nugget o' gold, high half a pound weight. Nat'ally that waked me up all over, an' I looked furder. The little chunks o' gold was layin' thick as six in a bed with three in the middle. I thought 'twas a pocket, but couldn't stop to fool then. Kiyered it up, then hunted up to two fellers. Now you see, someh'—er—like, au our pocket turns to be no better in an empty cache!"

"But why cache? I don't see why—"

"Look: one, two—haf a dozen; three marks was made by bags o' dust. Does gold gen'ly grow in skin sassiges? Sca'ly—eastways, not in 'pockets' made by natur'! Then it's a cache. More'n that, 'twas that Eli Brand cuss who emptied it. Yes—I've got his measure here; I ain't goin' it blind. So, you see, all's serene, since we've got the do-funny."

Not convinced, Mark and Pike were silent. Some points in the trailer's explanation seemed rather weak, but since their acquaintance, Old Business had gained such an ascendancy over their minds, that either would as soon have distrusted his own senses as the words of their friend.

"So much for so much, then; we'll call that matter settled. Now fer more 'portant business. Old man, jest take the trouble to open your ears, an' keep 'em so while I'm speakin'. Mind, now; I kin prove every word I'm goin' to say. Your real name is Harvey Wilson; you are a native of Baltimore; you were an inmate of an insane asylum. And now—shall I tell you what you were put in ther' for?"

Pike crouched upon the ground, his face livid with an unutterable horror, his eyes wild and glaring as those of a wild beast. His lips parted, his throat worked, but the words would not come forth. In low, steady tone Old Business continued:

"You see I know all; that all is much more than you ever dreamed of. Listen. I pledge you my word as a man, that you are far less guilty than you think. As God hears me, your daughter is still living."

With an inarticulate cry Pike sprung forward and clasped the trailer's knees. His features were frightfully convulsed, his eyes wild, bloodshot and wild as those of a madman, eloquently pleading for what his tongue failed to utter.

"Wait," was the cold reply. "A few days will seem short enough after all these weary years. You must earn the reward first. Are you willing?"

"Yes—anything," gasped Pike. "Only tell me what it is you expect, what it is you require of me!"

"You know where Wild Cat is! Good! I will give you a note, which you must place in the hands of Mat Blaine, the sheriff. You understand?"

While speaking, Old Business was hastily making some hieroglyphics upon the leaf of a small note-book, which he produced from an inner pocket.

"Deliver this, then return, and I will tell you where you can find your child, alive and well. Fail, and you shall never see her again. Now go. Remember, the sooner you deliver that note and return with the answer, the sooner will you see your child. If I don't meet you on the road, make at once for the little cave beneath the three cedars; you know where."

"You swear that you are not deceiving me?"

"I swear it, by the mother who bore me, by the God who made me," was the earnest and solemn reply.

Without another word Pike darted away upon his mission. Old Business turned to Mark, who had stood in open-mouthed astonishment during this strange interview, and addressed him in the old, whimsical manner.

"The old 'un scratches gravel mighty peart, don't he? Waal, that's need o' haste. You 'nd I, too, hev got work to do, an' we'd better

be bout it. You see'd how he trusted me; will you do the same?"

"I must help her," said Mark.

"That's swore to. Afore this time to-morrow, the little gal 'll be free as yender squirrel, or Old Business 'll be dead."

"Who and what are you, anyhow?" demanded Mark, looking into his comrade's face with something akin to awe.

"A man—a pore, forlorn critter which is a wanderin' 'round an' 'round in this 'ere wale o' sorers an' kenyon o' troubles an' tribulations, called by them what hain't heud the double fist o' ligion knockin' at the front door o' that beautiful world, which they never think is only a tavern putt up for the accommodation o' pore, pilgrimatin' sinners to tarry a bit at when we git futuros an' weary an' want to take a snooze. Oh—oh!"

Old Business nodded complacently toward Mark, a mild, benign light shining in his eyes.

"That means—none of my business?" with a half laugh.

"Young man, you're an ornament to your sect—a honor to them which bring you up. You kin see through a hole furder an' o' them whose eyes ain't better'n yours. An' yit—I don't know. Mebbe we won't never have a better time, an' the truth must out some time. Ay! so be it, then! Come—and prepare your mind for sad, bitter tidings."

Old Business set off across the valley at a rapid pace. Mark followed close at his heels, yet there was something so strange and unlike his usual self in the trailer, that he kept a hand upon one of the revolvers taken from the murdered Irishman. He half-believed that Old Business was crazy.

It was nearly noon when the two entered Dick's Pocket. Not until he passed by the ruins of the shanty and seated himself upon a rock beside the green, oblong mound, did Old Business speak.

The nasal twang had disappeared with the uncouth dialect.

"Young man," he began, in a clear, distinct voice.

"You have asked who and what I am, and I have brought you here, beside this grave

—the grave of the man who was called Gospel Dick—to satisfy your curiosity. You have heard of a man called Philip Epes?"

"Uncle Phil—what of him?" cried Mark, eagerly.

"Your uncle—that is, the half-brother of your father. He was a hard case, this Phil!"

"Stop! what right have you to slander the dead, and to me?" demanded Mark, his face flushing hotly.

"The truth is no slander, boy; I only speak of what I know.

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IN WEARINESS.

BY EBEN E. REXFORD,
Author of "Silver Threads Among the Gold."

I am weary, but yet rest,
Underneath the nodding clover,
With the grass upon my breast,
And the daisies bending over.
Oh! the thought is strangely sweet!
Rest and peace secure from sorrow,
And the tramp of busy feet;
Rest, that breaks on no to-morrow.

I am weary. Let me sleep,
With my hands upon my bosom,
But I pray you, let me keep
In their clasp, some little blossom.
I have loved earth's flowers well;
Some have I given, and some have given.
Are the roses half as fair?
That shall bloom for us in Heaven?

I am weary, and would rest;
As a child with burning griefing,
Finds upon its spirit's breast
Peace, in her great love believing;
So, to the green breast of earth:
Turn I, weary, tired and lonely,
For the rest that I shall find
On her gentle bosom only.

Only "An Assistant."

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

A MAY sunset, with tenderly-tinted skies, from whence the goldenly-glowing horizon melted to a delicious shade of blossom pink, away up in mid-heaven.

A warm, fragrant air was softly blowing, fresh from the west, scattering snowy showers of blossoms on the vivid grass, and swaying the loose puffs of hair on Beryl Hawthorne's forehead, as she stood leaning over the low, rustic gate, down by the entrance to the Havenleigh grounds—grand, picturesque grounds, that stretched for miles, and in the midst of which was the big, old-fashioned stone farmhouse, with its heavy, somber, substantial furniture, its stores of home-spun linen, its wealth of homely, solid comfort.

Beryl looked back from the gate to the house, that was flooded with the lingering glories of sundown, and a half sad, half exultant expression came to her eyes—grave, earnest, beautiful eyes, black as raven's plumage, and shaded by long, curling-lashed, white lids.

Then when an eager, almost impatient step brought John Havenleigh into sight, the expression of her face and eyes changed again into a look of soft, womanly pity.

He came up to her and laid his hands on hers; a big, fine-looking fellow, whom you would have felt would have been a good son, brother or husband.

Hardly handsome, and yet Beryl thought, as she looked at him that evening, she had never seen him look so well.

"I thought I would find you here, Beryl, for I remembered how fond you are of watching the sun go down from here. Isn't it grand?"

Just the tiniest possible guilty flush crept swiftly over the girl's face. She knew so well the charms of the sunsetting had not called her thither.

Suspicions of grateful tears were clouding her beautiful eyes.

"Don't talk about our being good to you, Beryl; you, who have been the life and sunshine of our house since you came to us, years ago, a friendless little waif—a disguised angel, rather."

Beryl smiled slightly. "You always have had the habit of overestimating me, you know, John."

He suddenly lifted both her hands from the gate, two such fair, womanly hands, without a ring to tell the sweet story of a lover and his love.

So suddenly and passionately he seized her hands that she looked up, half wonderingly.

"Don't say I overestimate you, Beryl—you, who are the idol of my life—you, whom I love with all my heart and soul and strength. Beryl! you are going away to-morrow, to be gone a long, long year. Will you leave me your blessed love? Beryl! will you promise to be my wife?"

She bowed her head under the torrent of words, like a lily before a gust. When she raised it, her splendid eyes were afloat in piti-ful tears.

"Oh, John! John! how it breaks my heart to hear this from you, knowing it can never be. Dear John, don't care for it, will you? try to give it up!"

Her distress was genuine; even among all the anguish her words caused, he saw that.

"Beryl, tell me how to give you up! How can I, when you are a part of my life; when, to know you are not to share it takes all the sunshine from it? Oh, Beryl, my lost darling!"

He was very pale, and she saw him tremble as he looked at her, as he fought against the crushing sorrow. Yet he did not urge her; he did not press his suit; that would not have been John Havenleigh, with his great, grand heart, so full of love for this girl, and equally as capable of tremendous sacrifice. A moment of silence, then Beryl's low, sweet voice broke it.

"I think I ought to tell you why, John. I don't want you to think it is because you are not worthy my affection; you are a thousand-fold better than I; no, hush, John, while I tell you that—that—that."

A banner of conscious rose-color waved over her face, and she averted her head, and toyed confusedly with a spray of early roses she had gathered a moment before.

Havenleigh's face was set and stern as a marble statue; only in his eyes was recorded the mighty anguish that stirred his soul.

"I understand, I think, Beryl, and although it is a terrible blow, you are right to tell me that Clifford Kenneth has won what is denied me. Beryl! Beryl! you are so dear to me, and yet he—"

His voice lost itself in a husky moan; then, for one instant, he looked at her sweet, pitiful face; looked hungrily at her, as though he wanted to seize her in his arms and rain kisses on her rare red lips and ivory-pure cheeks. Then he bowed adieu.

"I will not see you again. Good-by, Beryl, my—good-by!"

He did not offer his hand, or look at her again. Strong man that he was, he dared not trust himself; then he walked away, into the lengthening shadows, against the palely colored sky, a man who had received a heart-blow from the hand he loved best on earth.

Beryl watched him, with sad, pitying interest, her magnificent eyes full of brooding tenderness; for the one lover he had rejected; then, a moment later, flooding with rapturous ecstasy as Clifford Kenneth came riding up to the gate—bold, as women like to have their lovers, handsome as a god, and wearing such a

fascinating air of supreme assurance and confidence.

"Well, Queenie, true to your tryst, as usual! If you knew what a time I've had of it to get away, I'm sure you would appreciate it."

He did not dismount, but reined his horse close beside the gate, and stooped and kissed her, with an off-hand air of proprietorship that heightened her.

"You know I always appreciate your coming, Clifford. Should I not to-night, when tomorrow will divide us so far?"

A little frown of impatience corrugated his forehead.

"How I do dislike to hear you speak of this Quixotic idea of yours in such a matter of fact way. Your leaving Havenwood is all nonsense, anyhow, Beryl. As if you need to depend upon your own exertions in the future any more than in the past!"

Beryl looked wistfully at him, and caressed the glossy flanks of her lover's beautiful steed.

"Surely you do not think I can be content to accept dear old Mr. Havenleigh's bounty now that the way is open for me to take care of myself? I do not think I could. Anyhow," and she laughed, half-sadly, "it is all settled, my trunks packed, and to-morrow I leave for New York to accept the position I mentioned to you—assistant in Mme. Dijon's College for Young Ladies."

Kenneth shrugged his shoulders, then stooped and took the roses from her hand.

"Well, Beryl, of course your will is your law; but have you taken into consideration the fact that, in the estimation of my family, the adopted daughter and heiress of Havenwood and Mme. Dijon's assistant are two very different people?"

He smiled down in her eyes, but could not exercise the sudden look of pain and distress.

"Clifford! you mean—you surely do not mean—"

He laid one hand—so perfectly gloved—over her mouth.

"I mean, my dearest, that I shall never cease loving you. Kiss me, Beryl!"

He could sway her so—this proud, strong-hearted girl, because of his handsome face, and faultless manner, and graceful, independent style.

"It must be good-by, Clifford," she said a moment later. "Take this bunch of roses, and if ever the time comes that—that you feel it inevitably true that Mme. Dijon's assistant cannot enter your family, send me back the withered token."

Kenneth laughed, and looked straight in her eyes as he took the fragrant little *gage d'amour*.

"You never will see it again, Queenie, you solemn little darling, you! Another kiss, Beryl, for the last good-by, and remember, I letter every Tuesday from me."

Then he rode away; handsome, smiling, and the girl contrasted him with her other lover, as he said good-by with white lips.

A little sigh broke from her lips, and she went slowly up the silent, twilit lane.

"You may take the jewels away, Jeannette, and the mauve silk. I shall wear black to-night, with only a spray of natural pink roses."

It was one of the sweetest of voices that gave the kindly command, and a rarely glorious face that smiled on the obsequious French maid.

A pale complexion of ivory purity, and smooth as marble; with perfectly-chiselled lips of pomegranate color, and eyes brown, hair and lashes of dusky darkness. A face, once never to be forgotten—a woman, if once beloved, never to be again an object of indifference. A face we still remember—a woman we once knew, with seven years of added splendor—Beryl Hawthorne, with her proud, passionate heart as of yore. To-night, there was an unwon gleam in her tropical eyes, and there came tiny, flitting smiles to the perfect mouth oftener than ever before—so often that Jeannette wondered at it, in this grave, silent mistress of hers who was so beautiful, so talented, so rich, so sought after, and so exclusive.

The girl lingered curiously after she had arched over a spray of withered, scentless roses, that rattled crisply under her gentle touch, and scattered dried, yellow-brown leaves over her warm fingers. She laid it down, and took up another letter, fresh, newly dated, and addressed in the self-same hand to "Madeleine, care Mme. Dijon, —24th st."

She sighed, then smiled as she opened it, and upturned her face was whitely still. Her great, dark eyes burned like twin flames, fed on fuel of sorrow, and sharp, sudden pain; her golden hair clung lovingly to her neck and shoulders as she sat there, so white, so still, in the darkness that lowered over the city streets.

Outside, the street-lamps glowed like evil eyes through the gloom; she saw the one nearly opposite her door, and thought, with a thrill of numbing pain, that it never again would light his footsteps home. She heard the tread of occasional passers-by, and realized there was no one, in all the wide world, to come to her—the only one she ever had cared for was lying so still, so far away.

Her feet seemed chained to the floor, her body pinned to the sofa, so utterly powerless to move she was; and so she sat there—rather crouched there—hour after hour, with her cold hands lying limply on her lap, her dazed brain trying to comprehend all the strength of her affliction.

The little French clock struck nine, and ten, and eleven; the whole house was in total darkness; a dreary silence was brooding over the deserted streets and locked-in houses; and yet she sat there, in all the pangs of her widowhood, the victim of a man's foul conspiracy; as truly a sufferer as if her dead lay at her feet.

Finally she arose, totteringly, and with her trembling fingers lighted a lamp, that seemed only to make the darkness more visible. She went mechanically around the house, as was her custom, closing and fastening windows, and seeing that every thing was in perfect order, and in readiness for morning.

Then she dragged herself up-stairs to her bedroom, put the little night-lamp on the mantelpiece, and sat down again, in the large bamboo chair Frank liked to lounge in before he retired.

So desolate!—oh, so desolate! She drooped her head on her hands, and commenced another weary, heart-rending vigil—this young girl, with not a friend in the world to go to, to sympathize with her, or to advise, or to assist her.

All that lonely night Ethel never thought of undressing or refiring; all those long, awfully-lonesome hours she sat there, staring her hard fate in the face, and making up her mind what to do—since weeping and moaning were not the ways in which she manifested her grief.

With dawn, she was weary, haggard, unrefreshed; but she bravely took up the burden of life again, although her feet tottered at every step, and her heart ached with a dumb sickness that was the very essence of intensity.

She bathed, and made a fresh, simple toilet, then went quietly down-stairs, and prepared her breakfast; and if her heart bounded fiercely at sight of the vacant place never more to be occupied, she made no outward sign beyond a compressing of her lips, or a look of keener anguish in her sad eyes.

Then came news of John Havenleigh's departure for foreign lands, news that, somehow,

made her feel very lonely for a while; then, her *debut* as a singer; then, rapid successes; and now—this letter from the man who had discarded her because she was only an "assistant."

He did not mount, but reined his horse close beside the gate, and stooped and kissed her, with an off-hand air of proprietorship that heightened her.

"You know I always appreciate your coming, Clifford. Should I not to-night, when tomorrow will divide us so far?"

A little frown of impatience corrugated his forehead.

"How I do dislike to hear you speak of this Quixotic idea of yours in such a matter of fact way. Your leaving Havenwood is all nonsense, anyhow, Beryl. As if you need to depend upon your own exertions in the future any more than in the past!"

Beryl looked wistfully at him, and caressed the glossy flanks of her lover's beautiful steed.

"Surely you do not think I can be content to accept dear old Mr. Havenleigh's bounty now that the way is open for me to take care of myself? I do not think I could. Anyhow," and she laughed, half-sadly, "it is all settled, my trunks packed, and to-morrow I leave for New York to accept the position I mentioned to you—assistant in Mme. Dijon's College for Young Ladies."

Kenneth shrugged his shoulders, then stooped and took the roses from her hand.

"Well, Beryl, of course your will is your law; but have you taken into consideration the fact that, in the estimation of my family, the adopted daughter and heiress of Havenwood and Mme. Dijon's assistant are two very different people?"

He smiled down in her eyes, but could not exercise the sudden look of pain and distress.

"Clifford! you mean—you surely do not mean—"

He laid one hand—so perfectly gloved—over her mouth.

"I mean, my dearest, that I shall never cease loving you. Kiss me, Beryl!"

He could sway her so—this proud, strong-hearted girl, because of his handsome face, and faultless manner, and graceful, independent style.

"God knows I wish I could have won her! Kenneth, we won't talk of it, please. There are wounds time cannot cure. I loved her then, I love her now, wherever, whatever she is; and perhaps—God may be merciful to me yet, and give her to me."

"I cannot indorse that, Kenneth. To me, Beryl Hawthorne was the one woman in all the world. You will not forget to whom I left her."

Kenneth laughed carelessly.

"Let bygones be bygones, old fellow. Granted, I was a little taken with Beryl; it needn't have followed I must marry a schoolteacher."

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How strange it is that Georgia does not appreciate all your nobility of soul."

"And yet I am her inferior, Frank. She is perfect—perfect as an angel. Does it not seem strange to you that I feel so, while yet we are so terribly divided? I love her to distraction, and she must know it, and yet she is as cold as an iceberg."

"It is wrong—fearfully wrong. I have often thought of it, and much more than once decided to see her, and plead your cause with an eloquence the subject would lend. It kills me to see you so isolated, so ignored, while I am so happy through you."

Havelstock's tone was full of sympathy that touched Lexington to the heart.

"I am not utterly forsaken while I have such a friend as you, Frank. You, and you only, know our pitiful secret, and to you only can I come for comfort, sympathy, advice. And advice I want, just here and now."

Frank gave him a sharp, questioning look. Was Lexington playing straight into his hand? He subdued the triumph that sprang to his sinister eyes, and awaited the question that came, in a half-hesitating voice, that betrayed Lexington's reluctance in asking it.

"Do you think, really think, Frank, that if I go to Georgia again, humbly, and offer her my love, my pardon, and beg hers, she will repulse me? Tell me honestly, Frank; hurt me if necessary."

Havelstock averted his face as if he wanted to hide the emotion he simulated to perfection; he made no answer for a moment; then, when he turned his face around again, Lexington saw signs of pity and sorrow, and stern decision on it.

"You have forced me to a position I hoped never to have occupied. Before heaven, Lexington, rather than tell you what I know—well, I will not!"

Lexington started up in his chair, his eyes shining with sudden passion under his contracted brows.

"Go on, Frank! I demand your meaning. What you have to say is not your fault or mine. Go on."

His voice was strangely intense, and Havelstock saw the time was come to cast the firebrand that should make the flames of maddest jealousy burst into an unquenchable fire.

"Forgive me, then, when I tell you I have seen your wife meet her lover, at nearly midnight, in the summer-house yonder; I have heard words of passionate endearment; I have heard other appointments for the future. And that is why there is a gulf between you."

His low, tender, yet ringing words had only left his lips when Lexington's head dropped to the table, a gran of anguish on his lips, his frame shivering like an aspen.

For a second there was deadly silence while Havelstock gloated over the stricken man in mute, well-concealed satisfaction. Then Lexington raised his head feebly.

"Frank, it has nearly killed me! Georgia false!—Georgia false, when I would have staked my soul on her loyalty. I am, indeed, desolate—desolate! Frank—her lover—who is he?"

The positive torment in his soul failed to touch Havelstock; and yet he answered so earnestly, so kindly.

"That I do not know. I only caught a glimpse of a large, well-bearded man, dressed like a gentleman, with a voice denoting education and society usage. I remember his tones were very sweet. But, Lexington, I fear I have done an unwise thing. Are you sure I am forgiven? If you knew how I am pained to confess this terrible thing to you, you would wonder how I dared tell you."

"It is best for me to know, and I thank you for placing me where I can defend myself. Only leave me alone a little while."

He pressed Havelstock's extended hand warmly, and then watched him leave the room with eyes that seemed dazed with the scorching fires of jealousy, outraged, insulted, love, and just indignation that blazed high and hot in his tortured heart.

And Havelstock walked leisurely down to the croquet ground, where Miss Wynne was practicing her strokes.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ADDING INSULT TO INJURY.

For hours after Havelstock left him alone in the library, Lexington walked the floor in an agony too great for motionless endurance. The suddenness of the blow, and coming as it did from the hand he knew so well, and trusted so implicitly, nearly drove him mad; his passionate worship of the woman who had blighted his life, was only equalled by the blighting horror with which he learned of her perfidy.

His heart was out to its very core; he was attacked in every salient point by this astonishing news of Havelstock. His deep love was wounded to death; his fierce, unyielding pride outraged and insulted; his jealousy fired frightfully by the knowledge that Georgia vouchsafed to another the favors he had begged in vain. It was not strange that he felt nearly insane as he paced the room, with quick, excited footsteps, as one phase of the affair presented itself; then, with lagging tread and bowed head as he realized the disgraceful shame that had come upon him.

An hour passed; two; three; Lexington heard Ida Wynne's merry, girlish voice in laughing conversation; he heard the click of the croquet balls; and the grave, gentlemanly tones of Havelstock, who, conscious of the probability of scrutiny from the eyes in the library, preserved a half-sad demeanor, that was admirably intended to continue the impression his words had given.

Then there came a gentle rustle of skirts on the stairs, over the marble floor of the grand entrance hall, a heraldry of presence by a faint perfume of wood-violets—and then Mrs. Lexington passed the door of the library, that was partly ajar.

A bitter gloom darkened in Lexington's eyes as she halted, half-hesitatingly, and looked in, her pure, sweet face wearing an expression of such wistful pleading, that was partly negated by the cold, quiet curl of her red lips.

She was dressed with her usual elegance of attire, and Lexington wondered if she ever had looked so fair as now in the dress of unrelaxed black lace, without ribbon, or flower to lend brightness or color. Even her jewelry was of dull, dead gold, and yet she was radiant in her full flush of beauty; an angel in face and form; a devil at heart; Lexington said, as she bowed frigidly, and crossed the threshold.

A gentleman by instinct as well as by education, Lexington returned her salutation.

"Come in—syou will find a seat by this window very pleasant."

He made an honest effort to appear courteous, but there was an awful turmoil at his heart as he watched her sweep over the green carpet and then sink gracefully in the chair he had designated.

When she had seated herself he walked over to her and stood just before her, his grand face

pale as death, his eyes glittering, and looking her full in the face.

For a moment their eyes met, a deep, ominous silence reigning; then, a groan, the very essence of the anguish of his spirit, came from Lexington's lips.

Georgia raised her brows in quick questioning.

"Mr. Lexington, you are not ill—in pain?"

You are surely; let me assist you to a seat."

She obeyed, mechanically, while the hoarseness in his voice alarmed her more and more.

"Something is the matter. I beg you tell me."

He suddenly lowered his head so that their eyes were on a level, hers, half frightened, half pleading, in their lovely darkness, his lurid with the storm gathering over their heads.

"Something is the matter; something I would give all worldly possessions to know is only a dream—a horrid dream. You know, Georgia, how awfully true it is."

He meant her perfidy; she thought he meant the pitiful misunderstanding between them; and his strange words sent a new thrill of hope through every fiber of her being. Was a reconciliation coming at last, in God's mercy?

"Yes, I know it has been, as you say, awfully true; but let us regard this past as a dream, and let us awaken and begin anew. Theo, I am penitent to day—I, who vowed never to forgive you again, because you repulsed me so."

She stepped nearer him, her eyes flashing with a delicious expectancy, a half-trembling smile on her pleading lips.

He gazed at her as if drinking in every feature of her wonderful beauty; stared at her with his gloomy eyes until she dropped her own in sheer confusion.

"So your own lips condemn you—your own fair lips pronounce your falsehood; and you stand here, tempting me to madness with your beauty, and daring to ask me to regard it all a dream—daring to ask me to begin anew with you—*you!*"

She retreated again nearer her chair, her face paling; her expression rapidly changing from expectation to disappointment, then to curiosities amazement, then to indigitation.

"I am utterly at a loss to comprehend your meaning. Of what do my own lips convict me? that I love you through all your neglect of me?"

Her words seemed to add fuel to the fire.

"Love—love! How dare you take the word on your lips—*you*, as false as frailty itself! You talk of 'love' for me—of my 'neglect' of you, and ask, in your excellent imitation of innocence, of what your own words accuse you. 'Love' for me, whom you repulsed only to go, unmolested, to the arms of a lover at your charming rendezvous! You dare mention my 'neglect,' when you have been well entertained during my absence. And then say 'regard it as a dream, and begin anew!'"

Georgia listened to his scathing words in an amazement so astounding that she was powerless to move or speak. Her face was white with emotion, her hands were fairly rigid with surprise. In all her spotless purity, all her panoply of highest principle, her speckless virtue, her perfect womanhood, she stood before her husband, listening to words that froze her with fear and horror. At first she could not form the slightest idea of what he meant; her whole soul arose in honest wrath at the unjust imputation; and then, like a flash of light, came the knowledge that her husband had learned, somehow, of Carleton Vincy's presence at Tanglegwood.

The truth fairly crushed her; she sunk down into the chair with a weary, hunted horror over her face and in her eyes; and Lexington saw the sudden change, and interpreted it to her incapability to deny his charge.

Then, with her powerless, her piteous sinking under his own hand, came a transient tenderness for the creature he had hurt. A kinder light shone in his eyes, and there was a spic of softness in his voice.

"Confess, Georgia, that you have disgraced me, and brought confusion on your own head. Tell me all—everything—the worst, and if, in my judgment, you are honest and penitent, and sincere in your protestations to leave your lover and return to the only path wherein a woman can walk with safety, then I may possibly overlook your sin in memory of days when we were so briefly happy."

Georgia had called on all the forces of her mind during the moment her husband was speaking, in order to come to a decision. Should she tell him Carleton Vincy was alive, and thus make him despise her even more than when he first learned she was a divorced woman? She knew his overweening pride on the subject; she knew there was no hope of a final reconciliation if Lexington knew her former husband lived. She knew that Vincy might be bought off, and so, because she loved Lexington so, because she yearned so for his love and confidence again, Georgia made another terrible mistake, was again made the plaything of the Furies, who seemed forever presiding over her affairs.

Lexington waited a moment, wondering at her silence, little dreaming that, to shield his dear head from a blow she knew would nearly kill him, she accepted, in a measure, all the blighting scorn he had heaped upon her.

He waited, a gathering contempt and wrath plainly visible on his countenance and in his eyes.

"You have had ample time in which to deny your denial, and thereby ward off your lover's head the storm of vengeance which I swear shall be hurled upon it. Perhaps, however, you intend confessing your villainy, since denial seems useless."

She looked at him with great, anguishful eyes, her lips trembling, her eyes scintillant with a gleam he could barely meet.

She arose from her chair, with a slow, stately motion, and swept over to the side of the table.

She looked strangely unreal, standing with one marble-white hand resting heavily over the cover, her jet-black dress falling in curving gracefulness around her motionless figure, her face as white as if hewn from marble, her eyes so intensely dark and expressive.

Lexington looked at her with sharp pangs of mingling love and hatred, as she spoke in a low, hopeless, anguished voice.

"There is nothing to deny or confess; I am judged and condemned before I am heard. This is not the first time you have wounded me to my heart's core. For such pain I have forgiven you. But this is the first time—and you are the first and only man who ever dared insult me, Mr. Lexington—from this hour everything is eternally over between us."

Her voice faltered at the last words, and

yet, above the wall in her tones was a ring of defiance that told him it was true; there was no hope of peace between them now, whatever there may have been previously.

And so the Fate-ordained play went on. (To be continued—commenced in No. 295.)

THE HEART'S MASTER-KEY.

BY FRANK M. IMBRIE.

A beautiful, fragile vase was she; Treated with such a mingled form, Timed with life, slow, yet bright, Thinking 'twould break as brittle glass.

To atoms, in my fierce love-grasp;

So rarely fine was its fashioning;

The purple and lines of proudest king,

Seem'd coarse to wrap this dainty thing.

A delicate, opening floweret, she—

So fair, so tiny, that her matin lay,

So soft, so full, so fresh, I ween,

Her home must be in the wildwood green.

Ah, she's human! she stops to see,

Her face in the brook on the daisied lea;

But bird or human, she's not for me!

A distant, floating cloudlet, she—

Far off in her untouched, peerless grace

She stands, with a smile, a pearl in her eye,

Smiling away from my bright, gay view,

Seeming to beckon, then slip away.

Like an April breeze-borne cloud that lay

On the sky fair breast in mimic play.

Fabulous in her worth was she—

And the price I would pay for this rare

Revolving, in the earth, of regions fair

Was given in, that I thought was wrought.

How much with alay that gem

Then a whisper dropped from realms above,

Like softest notes of a cooling dove:

"Woman was given to man to love!"

NICK WHIFFLES' PET:

OR, NED HAZEL, THE BOY TRAPPER.

BY CAPT. J. F. C. ADAMS.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GRAVE VISIT.

NICK WHIFFLES was not a man to cultivate the niceties of speech, and when he came in the presence of Ned Mackintosh he quickly uttered the words that were upon the end of his tongue.

"I see'd Woo-wol-na, and he tells me that the gal is dead!"

"WHAT I?" demanded the young man, recollecting and staring at him, as if he doubted the evidence of his senses.

"That's what he says, but I don't believe it; curse his pict'er!"

The lover drew a sigh of relief.

"How you started me! Tell me all you have learned about it."

The hunter then proceeded to relate what the reader has already learned, adding:

"He said that Miona died a week ago, and was buried near the village, and if I wanted him, he would show me her grave."

"What did you say to the sounclord?"

"It come on me so sudden like, that I b'l'eved it, and started to see you; but as I come through the woods, I had time to think of it; and I made up my mind he had told me the biggest of a lie."

"But, Nick, maybe they have killed her, rather than let her fall into the hands of her friends," said the horrified Mackintosh, who could scarcely control his emotion.

"A week ago! Jess so; and that's why I know she isn't dead—leastways of no disease. That's this about it: they've been expecting me, and the cunning old varmunt has got up the story to put me off the track, thinking that I would give up all hope of gettin' her, and leave her to become the wife of Red Bear, seen as you was out of the way."

"Do you think Miona is in the village?"

"No; she can't be now, at least."

"Where is she?"

"I don't know; Woo-wol-na has took her to some place and left her in the keeping of some one—where she's goin' to stay till they think there's no danger of my looking any more for her, and then she'll be turned over to Red Bear."

"Heavens!" exclaimed the excited Mackintosh, "what an outrage! I wish I had an army to wipe out that nest. What pleasure it would give me to do it! How are we going to find where she is?"

"I think

for, above all things, it was now important that they should not be seen by any of their enemies.

The greater part of the day was spent in stealing along in this cautious manner, constantly on the look-out for their enemies. Near the middle of the afternoon, they had a narrow escape from running directly in sight of a large canoe full of Indians, but, fortunately, they "backed water" and ran in, under cover of the bank in time to escape discovery.

Just at nightfall the mouth of the creek was reached, and they landed. The boat was pulled up out of sight, and Calamity was left to guard the entrance, and the two withdrew out of sight altogether of any who might pass during daylight even.

Young Mackintosh could scarcely conceal his anxiety and impatience. If Nick had settled in his mind where they were to look for Miona, he saw no reason why they should not press on at once and take time by the forelock.

"We expect to make our search there, Nick, and why wait until our foes are ahead of us?"

"Trust to me, trust to me," was the reply. "It may be that the Red Bear will come down the creek to-night, and, if that is so, we'll run afoul of him, as sure as the world."

"Why not go overland? It's only a matter of ten miles or so, and we can make it in a couple of hours."

"And leave a trail, that'll be certain to betray us."

"Well, as you please then," replied Ned, settling himself back, in the expectation of spending a number of weary hours.

"You ought to have learned the virtue of patience when you was Ned Hazel, trampin' in the woods with me. Don't you know the Esquimaux of the upper Hudson Bay will set for a dozen hours by the air-hole in the ice waiting for the seal to come up and git scared?"

"I hope you don't expect we are going to do the same?"

"Not unless it is necessary, but we must wait; the Whiffles family always had the faculty of waiting. Fact of it was, some of 'em waited too long, and, for all I know, some of 'em are still waiting—Hullo!"

At this juncture, Calamity gave utterance to a low, almost inaudible growl, and springing to their feet, both the men were at his side in an instant.

The faint moon, of which Nick had spoken, had risen, and was already overhead, so that they could both see to the opposite side of the narrow creek.

"Sh!" whispered the trapper, "some one is comin', sartin."

The ripple of oars was plainly discernible, and while they were straining their eyes to pierce the gloom, they saw a small canoe, with two Indians in it, making its way upstream.

It was near the center of the creek, and moving in a manner which showed the occupants had no fear or thought of discovery upon the part of corsairs or interlopers.

Nick was especially anxious to learn whether one of the men was Red Bear or not, but there was not sufficient light for the purpose, although he was satisfied in his own mind that the young chief was in the boat.

The two men scarcely breathed until the canoe had passed out of sight. Then the trapper noiselessly launched his own canoe, and entering, Calamity was placed in the bow.

"The pup can see further in the dark than his master, and when he can't see one of the varmints, he can scent him. You see, it won't do to run afoul of Red Bear."

"Why won't it do?" demanded Ned. "There are as many in this boat. We have rifles, and I carry a Colt's revolver. We could put both of them out of our path as well as not, and I like to do it."

"When you've as many gray hairs in your head as I have, you won't be quite so eager to send a ball through the head of any critter that happens to cross your path."

"You won't shrink from it if it should be come necessary?"

"Exactly; but it hain't become necessary, Ned; if Woo-wol-na keeps in our way, I'd shoot him; but if we kin get the gal out of their hands without harming a red-skin, I'm going to do it. When I was on my first warpath, it was just the other way, but I kin tell you, Ned, this killing people is a bad business, any way you can fix it, and to my mind, any man is guilty that wants to do it."

"You are right," replied Ned, who could but agree with the humanitarian sentiments of the old hunter, who could pass through so many scenes of violence and bloodshed, and still, like a Christian warrior, retain a yearning love for peace and quietness.

"My whole heart is bent on gaining Miona from their hands," added the lover. "I have prayed and longed for this day; I can never leave American territory without her, and I will stop at no danger or sacrifice to accomplish my purpose."

"Just so," replied the imperturbable Nick, as he softly dipped his paddle and kept the boat to its course. "Your heart is full of love, and when a man is in that kettle I take it that he's blind to prudence and common sense. If you was to undertake this business alone, the end of it would be that you would have your 'un' raised, and would go under afore you had fairly started."

The sober thought of Mackintosh admitted the truth of all the trapper had uttered, and he could not refuse to acquiesce in his cool judgment and prudent deliberation.

All this time the canoe was moving up the creek with the silence of some aquatic monster stealing his way through a gauntlet of enemies to some safe retreat in the ocean beyond. There was little likelihood of the boat ahead checking its speed, or being overtaken by its pursuer; but nevertheless there was a possibility, and Nick Whiffles was not the one to let his haste run him into any "condemned difficulty" of that nature.

Calamity showed a realizing sense of the responsibility that rested upon his canine shoulders. Sitting on his haunches, with his fore-paws resting upon the gunwale of the prow, he peered into the darkness, every sense on the alert for the dusky foes in advance.

The sound of a rustling leaf did not escape, nor did it deceive him. He had hunted and roamed too many years with his master to need any instruction at this late day. Nick knew exactly what the capabilities of the brute were, and precisely how far he was to be depended upon; so, while he kept the canoe cautiously gliding up one bank, he found time to hold whispered converse with his companion, scarcely looking ahead, but leaving that duty to his faithful friend.

Mile after mile gilded behind them, and they were drawing near the spot where they believed the beautiful, the loving, the trusting Miona was longingly awaiting their coming.

Ned Mackintosh became silent and thoughtful. The belief that the critical moment for which he had been waiting through four long, weary years, was at hand; that she toward

whom his thoughts had turned, during all that time, when the broad ocean rolled between them, was now within a few miles, and that every moment was drawing them nearer together, filled him again with a nervous uneasiness, which he controlled with much difficulty, and which did not escape the observant eye of the old trapper.

"You must git over that," admonished the latter, "for if you don't, you won't be good for any thing, and I'll leave you ashore."

He strove manfully, and after a time he gained more mastery over himself.

"I will be all right when the time comes," he replied.

"The time has come now," said Nick, as with one sweep of his paddle he ran the prow against the land, and stepped out.

"What does this mean?" asked Ned, in some astonishment.

"Them lodges that I was talking about ain't two hundred yards from this spot."

"Is it possible?" was the exclamation of the young man, as he stepped out; "and what are we to do now?"

"You're to lay here, while me and the pup go forward and rakkynoater a little; and, Ned," he added, in his most impressive manner, "do you promise to mind me to the very letter?"

"Of course I do."

"All right; then don't move six feet from here till I give you word. I'll be back soon."

The next minute Ned Mackintosh was alone. About an hour passed, when Nick Whiffles returned with the noiselessness that characterized all his movements, and stooping down beside his young friend, he placed his hand upon his shoulder, and said:

"Ned, we've found the place where the varmints have hid the gal!"

CHAPTER IX.

A FINGER ON THE TRIGGER.

AFTER making his startling announcement to Ned Mackintosh, Nick Whiffles explained in substance, as follows:

Upon leaving him in company with Calamity, the two had moved stealthily forward, until they reached the desolate clearing where stood the "ruins" of what had once been a large and stirring Blackfoot village. These ruins consisted of three lodges only, in two of which lights were burning. In one of these were seated Red Bear and two warriors, the three engaged in smoking and discussing some important matter.

There was difficulty in gaining a view of the interior of the other, as the entrance was closed; but, after lying down in front of it for a half-hour, it was opened, and an old squaw, Miona seated upon the ground, in front of a small fire, engaged in knitting some bead ornament. The firelight shone full upon her face, so that there was no mistake about it.

"Nick," said Mackintosh, at this point in his narrative, "as you love me, grant me one favor."

"What is it?"

"Take me to the spot where you crouched, when you saw her, there let me stay one minute and look upon her face!"

"But the danger—"

"You can trust me. Remember I have not seen her for four years. I can be as quiet and stealthy about it as you!"

"Well, I'll do it—come along!"

They stole their way through the wood and across the clearing in the direction of one of the lodges, in which a light could be seen shining, moving with the stealth of men who knew that a single false step would be paid by the penalty of their lives.

The whole affair was in opposition to the sense of Nick Whiffles, but he could not well refuse the request of his young friend, made as it was with such direct earnestness to him.

Finally Nick paused and whispered:

"Crawl to that spot, and lay flat down, and the gal hasn't changed her position, you'll see her face a blamed sight plainer than you can see mine."

Nick did as requested, and complete success crowned the effort. He saw Miona seated in front of a fire engaged with some fancy work, and seemingly as quiet and unsuspecting as though seated among her own friends.

Her head was bent, so that the view was not as good as could be desired; but such as it was, it made the heart of the lover bound with delight.

At this critical moment, the door of the other lodge opened, and Red Bear issued forth, walking straight toward the one where Miona and the dog were sitting. It was a dangerous instant, and looked as if discovery were unavoidable. There was no way for Calamity to slip out, without being seen by the chief, who would be certain to identify him at the first glimpse.

Nick Whiffles steadily raised the hammer of his rifle, prepared to fire at Red Bear if the discovery should take place, for it now looked as if it was to come to that.

But the wonderful sagacity of Calamity proved equal to the emergency. His sharp ear detected the approach, and he seemed to comprehend at the same instant that it was impossible for him to escape from the dog.

As quickly as a flash, he whisked behind Miona and crawled beneath the skins, upon a pack of which she was sitting.

Nick Whiffles witnessed this maneuver of the other lodger, but he could not well refuse the request of his young friend, made as it was with such direct earnestness to him.

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THAT PULL-BACK DRESS.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

She wore a plumed back dress,
One of the modern style,
And looked like those Egyptians old
Or like the ladies of old
And when I saw her on the street,
In midst of fashion's din,
I bit my lips for fear I'd say—
"That's a little bit too thin!"
In other days I knew her
Ere this contracted dress
Had come to make that rounded form
To fit her.
But now I turned aside and wept,
And sorrowfully mused,
To see how very much in life
My darling was reduced.
It was a pull-back dress—
One of the tightest kind;
It must have taken all her maids
To pull it back and bind
And when it was tight it was,
And with such little slack,
That when she'd take a forward step
It made her take one back.
She started in a dry-good store
To buy some silks and lace;
That pull-back dress it interfered,
And didn't let her have the place;
And when with pain she got into
A millinery store,
That dress pulled back so very tight
It drew her through the door.
She started to an artist's room
To get her photograph.
But she could not ascend the stairs,
And made the poor laugh.
Then she went to a dress pinned,
And made her gait so awkward
That but once in half a square
Her feet touched on the walk.
I lifted her across the mud,
And pulled her back so strong
That any step that she could make
Was not two steps forward.
And she stumbled and fell down,
Powerful was the strain,
That dress would hit her up and put
Her on her feet again.
Alas, there came a shower of rain!
Her little parasol
Could not keep from off her dress
The little drops at all;
She ran to a dry-goods store;
And sorrowful to think
That very plumed-back'd dress of hers
Straightway began to shrink.
So fast did it consolidate
So tightly was it plumed.
That people looked at her and said,
"How dreadfully she's thinned!"
It drew her up to nothing,
Pulled back, but early sent ahead,
With but herself to blame!"

What Was It?

BY EBEN E. RExford.

FORMERLY, when people asked me if I believed in ghosts or spirits, I used to answer very emphatically, No!

Now, if I am interrogated on the subject, I answer that I do not know. From which you will see that my unbelief has been shaken. Shall I tell you about it?

I had never thought much about such things. Sister Elsie and I lived alone, and I, being a practical sort of woman, had the oversight of everything, and consequently little time to indulge in speculations about visitors from other worlds, if I had been inclined to do so by my tastes. Which I was not.

One evening, Mr. Farleigh, a friend of ours, came in to spend an hour or two, and brought a friend with him. Max Lovel was a young author, whose poems and stories I had read, and often wished I could know. And as for sister Elsie, she was half in love with him before she ever saw him.

Somehow our conversation turned on the subject of ghosts. I think we had been talking about Poe and his wild, strange stories, and you know it is an easy transition from Poe to spirits and ghosts. I think they must have haunted him day and night.

I declared my unbelief in strong terms, and ridiculed the idea of anything so improbable and unlikely as the spirits of the dead coming back to earth.

At first, Max Lovel had but very little to say on the subject, but I saw that he was greatly interested in the conversation.

Suddenly Elsie turned to him and asked him what he thought.

"I believe in ghosts," he answered, quietly. "I disagree with your sister's opinion entirely. I think it quite probable—more so than many other things that are continually happening around us—that spirits from another world can come to us."

Fairleigh laughed at his friend's earnestness. "I never saw anything of the ghostly order myself," he said. "But I have heard so much said on the ghostly side of the question that I am not prepared to express my disbelief in ghosts as strongly as Margaret has."

"I should like to ask what grounds you have for your belief," I asked Lovel.

"I hardly know myself," he answered. "I don't know that I have any grounds for belief, except a firm conviction existing in my own mind that such things as spirits do sometimes make themselves visible to mortal eyes. I have never doubted but that there are really such things as ghosts. I never saw one, but that is no proof to me that there are no such things, nor that other people have not seen them."

"I should like to see one," said I, incredulously. "Then I might believe."

"I should like to know if there were such things," Elsie said, with a little shiver of awe. "But seeing a ghost—that's quite another thing."

"I will believe when I see one, and not before," I declared.

When our visitors were gone, Elsie and I sat and talked about what had been said. The subject had a strange fascination for me, despite my avowed unbelief.

After that, Max Lovel came to see us often. From the first I saw that there was a mutual attraction between him and Elsie. And I was satisfied that it was so. I had perfect faith in him, and though it wrung my heart to think of letting her go, I knew of no one to whom I would more gladly give her up.

"You are not to think of it as letting her go," he said to me. "But that you are gaining a brother. I will try to be a true brother to you, Margaret, and if I am, you lose nothing, and gain something."

So when he asked us if we did not think duty called him, I was not surprised. Elsie grew white for a moment, and then I saw her shut her lips tightly together, as if to keep back any words of remonstrance that might rise. Then, after a moment, she said:

"If you want to go, I will not keep you back."

Then I got up quietly and stole away, and left them there alone.

The months went by. We had frequent letters from him. We learned to look and wait for letter-day as if all other days were of little account. Oh, those long, lonesome days! How many thousands of women, North and South, waited for letters from those they missed so much. And how many waited for the letters that never came!

And they are waiting still!

But some time the message will come, and then! Oh, waiting hearts, wait on a little longer!

One afternoon we were sitting on the porch. We had been talking of Max. I say we had been, for at the time this singular impression of which I am about to tell you came to me, we were not talking on any subject. We had been thinking our own thoughts for some time and no word had been uttered between us.

Suddenly a strange sensation came over me. I cannot describe it to you. It was like being away from your own self—as if you had lost your individuality for the time, and were part of everything. I seemed to be near Max. I could not see him, but I felt that he was somewhere near, and in trouble. The impression was wonderfully vivid. It took possession of me instantly, and I could not rid my mind of it.

I looked at Elsie. She was very pale. "What is it?" I asked, getting up, and going to her side.

"I don't know," she answered. "I felt as if I were near Max, and heard him cry out, but I could not go to him. I'm afraid something has happened, Margaret. I never felt so before in all my life!"

I went away by myself, and tried to rid myself of the idea that something had happened to Max. But I could not. He seemed to be near me all the while. His presence pervaded the room. Have you never felt that a person was watching you, and looked up to meet his gaze?

Young Davis was one of the first to make an open stir in the matter. That very Sunday, after dinner, when most of the camp was gathered together in one spot, he suddenly jumped upon an old wheelbarrow that had retired from active service, and called for attention. His speech was short, but to the point.

"My friends," he cried, in a ringing voice, "may there be men here something like myself, that don't care to work like Government mules for the benefit of other men not one-tenth as honest and ten times as lazy as they are. We can't work days unless we sleep nights, and we can't sleep nights if we've got to sit up and hug our gold-dust to keep it from the thieves. Things have come to that pass where something's got to be done, and I, for one, am ready to help do it."

There was a murmur of universal approval when Davis finished, and a voice shouted out above the rest:

"The young feller is right. We'll hang the first thief caught, and we won't stop to try him either."

A vigilance committee was chosen on the spot, the thief was denounced as the worst crime in the calendar, and hanging was to be its punishment.

Poor Davis! Little did he think that the very first man whose neck would be in danger under this new dispensation would be one who not only robbed but murdered Davis himself. Things went on quietly for two nights in succession; then all at once in the dead of night Stevens and I, whose tent was directly adjoining that of Surly Bill and Davis, were aroused by a pistol shot and in a minute Bill himself came running into the tent, his face all covered with blood, crying out that they had been robbed and he believed his partner was done for. We hurried out but there were no signs anywhere of the thief. Inside the tent was a verification of the terrible truth of Bill's story. By the dim light of the lantern hanging on the tent-pole we saw poor Davis' body lying on his blanket yet in a half-upright position and looking not so much like a dead man as one first starting from sleep. Closer examination showed that he was lying in a pool of his own blood, blood which had flowed from several frightful knife wounds in his side, in one of which a large Bowie-knife still remained—afterward ascertained to be the murdered man's own weapon. A strange part of it was that the arms were extended and the stiffened hands clutched fast an old mining boot, an ordinary boot such as might have belonged to half the men in the camp, so that it furnished no clue at all to the murderer. So tightly though was the hold upon this boot that it was found impossible to free it without prying or cutting, so it was left where it was. A careful search through the camp revealed no mate to it anywhere. The bag of gold-dust, the entire result of their month's work, and which had been buried under the blanket on which the men slept, was gone. Surly Bill's story was very simple. He slept soundly and had known nothing at all of the matter until suddenly awakened by some one stepping on his leg. Opening his eyes he saw a man making for the door. He shouted at him and sprang to his feet when the thief turned and shot at him once, then disappeared. The ball had inflicted a severe flesh wound across his left temple and seemed to stun him a bit. When he got to the tent entrance nobody was to be seen. He had noticed that the thief limped a little, but we accounted for this by the fact that he had but one boot on. This was the whole story so far as Bill knew anything about it. His wound did not prevent his being up and about at once.

The dead man's partner took entire charge of the burial. He had a kind of a weakness for the young feller, he said, and would rather do it all himself. So just at twilight the next day he took the body in his arms and carried it to the trench where only the day before Davis himself had been digging, and then he covered it with earth. There was neither sermon preached nor prayer said. Funeral demonstrations were held to be but sickly sentiment in those days in Blue Devil Canon.

Altogether the whole affair was a mystery. For a whole twenty-four hours it was talked over and wondered at in the camp; there were efforts made to discover the murderer and threats of dire vengeance if he should be found; but he was not found, and quickly men resumed their own labors and forgot all about it.

But there was one pair—as strangely assort'd couple as ever I knew, who certainly did have wonderful luck from the very first. These two were Surly Bill, a sullen, cross-grained, ill-conditioned fellow, well-known down at the Bender Gulch as a compound of ruffian and coward, and a young fellow named Davis, a man evidently bred a gentleman, educated and refined, but by some strange freak of circumstances brought among men and scenes plainly repugnant to his tastes and habits.

Two things about him, however, won the immediate respect of his fellow-citizens of Blue Devil Canon—his pluck and his luck. No danger or labor or hardship seemed to daunt him, and his determination was constantly rewarded by a greater amount of success than fell to any man in the camp. It always seemed to me that he entertained no great degree of affection for his partner, but Surly Bill evidently appreciated the advantages of sharing with a lucky man, and Davis, for some reason or other, did not think he could fairly dissolve the partnership.

Blue Devil Canon was to all intents and purposes a healthy enough locality, yet it was not long before a disease broke out among us, not uncommon in mining districts, yet one

which always creates a panic there, viz., *thieving*. Almost every morning somebody or other awoke to find his pile diminished or gone entirely. Saturday night Stock Edwards and his pal, two very respectable fellows, were cleaned out entirely, and Sunday morning, in broad daylight, two others returning from the regular Sunday service (mixed drinks and Derringers) in the bar-room of the "Heavenly Home," found that their earthly all had been coolly appropriated by their partner, an ex-murderer from Sacramento, who had been left to watch it, and who, in spite of the quick pursuit of a band of mounted volunteers, got off safely with his booty.

Men began to scowl dangerously, and talk of lynch law. They could stand murder and fighting and all that sort of thing. Pistol balls and Bowie-knives might be showered about in the community with any amount of liberality, and they complained not; a little excitement now and then was healthy and needful. But when it came to being robbed of what it was the hardest kind of work to acquire, then the public mind began to grow indignant, and strove to concentrate its powers upon the problem of finding some way of putting a stop to this.

Young Davis was one of the first to make an open stir in the matter. That very Sunday, after dinner, when most of the camp was gathered together in one spot, he suddenly jumped upon an old wheelbarrow that had retired from active service, and called for attention. His speech was short, but to the point.

"Young Davis, avenged, that evidence was not quite sufficient, and was after all entirely circumstantial. Could we get any more evidence? If we could but discover the revolver or the other boot, or maybe the stolen treasure itself, what story might they not relate? Sooner than we thought, accident was to give us the desired clue.

A night or two after this, late in the evening, I chance to pass Surly Bill's tent door on my way to bed, when the sound of his voice within arrested my steps. To whom could he be talking at this time of night? I would see; and quite in accordance with camp etiquette, I lifted the tent-flap and went in.

Bill lay there asleep on his blanket, muttering under his breath. I heard to myself in the bushes outside, "I'm an' Brad warnt's goin' to let the red cusses hev our top-knots for nothin', we went fur 'em; but that war too memfy fur us, an' the fast I knowed, they hed me down, an' I war a pris'ner. But, somehow, Brad managed to git through 'em, an' out 'pon the clearin'; then he started fur a bit uv timber, a leetle ways off. The red-skins gave a terrible yell, an' all started fur Brad, captin' two, that stopped to keep me out the rest cuds' ketch Brad."

"At the fast start, the red-skins tried to shoot Brad, but purty soon I seed they hed given up the idea, an' they wanted to kill him alive. Up course, Brad stood no chance uv runnin' away from 'em, es they war mounted; but still, I knowed that they cuds' git him in a minnit, fur he cuds' run the fastest uv enny chap I ever seed, an' nothin' suited uv him better."

"Es the last red-skin in pursuit of Brad went out uv sight; I turned to my kaptin', who hed also been watchin' the race. Ef I hed only hed my hands free, them two varmints would hev hed to stand round; but work an' twist my best, I could not git free. So I give up all hope in the direction, thinkin' that I war a goner; and wonderin' what hed become of Luke, who I hed not thought uv till that minnit. I soon come to the conclusion, however, that the red-skins must hev rubbed him out; when suddenly the bushes parted, an' he, who I hed just made up my mind es gone under, rushed, like a flash, toward the two red-skins. In an instant one uv 'em hit the dust, and the next minnit Luke closed in with the other, an' after a hard tussle the red-skin went under, too. Then, after wipin' his knife on the ground, Luke cut me free, an' without a word he darted back inter the bushes, to git out of the way after the red-skins that war arter Brad shud've git back."

"I spects them ar' red-skins war awful mad when they got back with Brad, an' found the two warriors dead an' me gone. But they cuds' help theirselves; though ef I hed bin fur keepin' him fur the torture, they wud' hev kilt Brad on the spot. However, es Luke an' I kepts ourselves out uv the way, the red varmints had to put up with what they hed got."

"When we knew that the way was clear, Luke an' I left our hidin'-place an' followed clus upon the red-skins, for we hed no idee uv lettin' them do as they war a mind to with Brad, without tryin' to help him. Ef I hed bin in a single chance for us when they got back to the ravine, whar Luke hed got me away, -- shud've tried it. But that war none. The red cusses war memfy for us; an' we knowed that the only chance uv gettin' Brad away that trail, hopin' that sumthin' might turn up to help us git Brad out of his fix."

"The red-skins, arter trappin' fur 'em an hour, halted; when purty soon they war jined by another party, nearly es large as the other. But I war to the ravine, whar Luke had got me away, -- shud've tried it. But that war none. The red cusses war memfy for us; an' we knowed that the only chance uv gettin' Brad away that trail, hopin' that sumthin' might turn up to help us git Brad out of his fix."

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